

Ciudad Juarez: A Feral City Threat on our Doorstep?

by

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Class of 2013

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
<p>The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.</p>					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) xx-03-2013		2. REPORT TYPE STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Ciudad Juarez: A Feral City Threat on our Doorstep?				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Lieutenant Colonel Warren J. Curry United States Marine Corps				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Dr. Paul Kan Department of National Security & Strategy				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Word Count: 6,839					
14. ABSTRACT <p>Throughout the last ten years, the Mexican city of Ciudad Juarez has experienced almost unprecedented levels of violence due to uncontrolled drug cartel activity. This once functioning city became the murder capital of the world and suffered negative economic, civil, and security ramifications. Mexican governmental efforts were unable to reduce the violence or improve the standard of living amongst Juarez residents. However, during the last twelve months Juarez has seemingly recovered as a failed city, and exhibited an unforeseen rebound with improved metrics. Security professionals, local residents, and U.S. governmental officials are left to speculate the reasoning behind these improved conditions. Although security professionals have recently introduced the theory of failed cities within a functioning national government, all of this research has assessed characteristics associated with insurgent activity. However, the effects of insurgent activities do not necessarily correspond to cities suffering from criminal organizations such as drug cartels. This paper will consider a different set of diagnostic tools to assess a prospective failed city, such as Ciudad Juarez, based on the activities of a high intensity criminal</p>					
15. SUBJECT TERMS High Intensity Criminal Organization, Drug Cartel, Sinaloa Cartel, Failed City.					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 34	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UU	b. ABSTRACT UU	c. THIS PAGE UU			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code)

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Report Date: March 2013

Page Count: 34

Word Count: 6,839

Key Terms: High Intensity Criminal Organization, Drug Cartel, Sinaloa Cartel,
Failed City.

Classification: Unclassified

Throughout the last ten years, the Mexican city of Ciudad Juarez has experienced almost unprecedented levels of violence due to uncontrolled drug cartel activity. This once functioning city became the murder capital of the world and suffered negative economic, civil, and security ramifications. Mexican governmental efforts were unable to reduce the violence or improve the standard of living amongst Juarez residents. However, during the last twelve months Juarez has seemingly recovered as a failed city, and exhibited an unforeseen rebound with improved metrics. Security professionals, local residents, and U.S. governmental officials are left to speculate the reasoning behind these improved conditions. Although security professionals have recently introduced the theory of failed cities within a functioning national government, all of this research has assessed characteristics associated with insurgent activity. However, the effects of insurgent activities do not necessarily correspond to cities suffering from criminal organizations such as drug cartels. This paper will consider a different set of diagnostic tools to assess a prospective failed city, such as Ciudad Juarez, based on the activities of a high intensity criminal organization, such as a Mexican drug cartel.

Ciudad Juarez: A Feral City Threat on our Doorstep?

The United States' geopolitical role within the international community has provided unique freedoms and opportunities unobtainable to most nations. Based on its unique geography, the U.S. has historically enjoyed greater domestic border security compared to other nations and has exploited this advantage to focus elsewhere. However, contrary to the lack of publicity in mainstream media our neighbor to the south, Mexico, has been under siege from violent drug cartels whose prominence continues to grow domestically and internationally. The seemingly uninhibited growth of drug cartel power poses a serious risk to the United States due to our mutually beneficial relationship with Mexico. Mexico is our third largest trade partner, behind Canada and China, and accounts for nearly \$1 billion dollars of trade daily. It is not simply manufactured goods that cross between the two borders; Mexico is home to almost one million Americans and 30 million Americans are of Mexican descent, directly contributing to over one million legal border crossings each day.¹

These few facts shed some light on the favorable relationship the U.S. has developed with Mexico, however a separate set of statistics reveals a darker side of this border relationship. Recent assessments indicate 95% of all cocaine illegally imported into the U.S. comes through the U.S.-Mexico border². Additionally, approximately 980 local governments in Mexico are involuntarily manipulated by drug cartels, whose influence has caused a spike of violence to gain total control of drug routes to U.S. cities.³ The drug routes contribute to the U.S. Department of Justice's National Intelligence Center officially recognizing the dominant presence of Mexican drug cartels in more than 230 U.S. cities.⁴ U.S. cooperation with the Mexican government has failed

to reduce Mexican drug cartel violence, prosperity, and influence. Within the last ten years the Mexican city of Ciudad Juarez, which is less than three miles from El Paso, TX, has become a helpless victim of this narco-criminal activity. With 3,000 recorded murders in 2010⁵, Ciudad Juarez was labeled the murder capital of the world and garnered international headlines due to the violence experienced from 2005-2010. After two years of research, a Brookings Institute fellow, Vanda Felbab-Brown, stated “Perhaps more than any other place in Mexico, Ciudad Juarez has become a symbol of the drug-related violence of the 2000s... When I visited Ciudad Juarez in March of this year (2009), it was palpable how strongly the community was gripped and pained by the violence.”⁶

Based on the severity of these observations, security professionals question whether Juarez has become a completely failed city. An analytical assessment of a city progressing from relative normalcy into one which is void of basic governance, security, and stability was first introduced in a Dr. Richard Norton article, *Feral Cities*, published in the *Naval War College Review* in 2003. This exploratory idea which was subsequently expanded by Dr. Norton in 2010 and evolved by Dr. Bunker and Mr. Sullivan in their 2011 article, *Integrating feral cities and third phase cartels/third generation gangs research: the rise of criminal (narco) city networks and BlackFor*, realizes the possibility of feral cities based on the proliferation of insurgent operations within major international cities. Although this research attempts to address a clear and present national security issue as it relates to drug cartel proliferation in Mexico, these assessments erroneously identify the ultimate objectives of the drug cartels. The inaccurate evaluation of the cartel's objectives has led to inaccurate diagnostic

conditions of a possible feral city, such as Ciudad Juarez, permeated by a high-intensity criminal organization, the Sinaloa drug cartel. This paper will revise the previous metrics of a feral city by assessing a metropolitan area, like Ciudad Juarez, through an accurate analysis of the strategies and ultimate goals of a Mexican drug cartel, like the infamous Sinaloa Cartel.

Ciudad Juarez Analysis

As previously mentioned, Ciudad Juarez is located just three miles from El Paso, TX and is home to approximately 1.3 million people. Ciudad Juarez has one of the highest population growth rates in Mexico over the last 50 years, to include a population which has doubled since 1990.⁷ Several causal factors have attributed to Juarez's population growth, but undoubtedly its proximity to the U.S. border had a significant impact. U.S. companies have capitalized on Juarez's inexpensive labor force and geographical proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border to maximize profit margins. Cooperative legislation arrangements between the two countries, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), have benefited Juarez by facilitating a 30% increase in assembly plants.⁸ This type of foreign investment in manufacturing and assembly has provided over 20,000 new jobs within the first half of 2012 alone.⁴ The growing economic relationship between Juarez and the U.S. border is further evident in a \$71.1 billion cross-border trade in 2011.⁹ In addition to the manufacturing and trade relationship Juarez has created with the U.S., the population of Juarez seamlessly integrates with El Paso each day. Just one of the bridges, Paso del Norte, facilitates the crossing of over 12,000 Mexicans daily.¹⁰

Unfortunately, from 2006 to 2010 Juarez was internationally known for anything but its economic growth and promising future as an industrial partner with the U.S.

Since 2006 Juarez has been notoriously known as one of the murder capitals of the world. This murder rate within Juarez began its sharp rise in 2005 and reached its height in 2009 and 2010 when the city averaged 130 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. Juarez's murder rate was 25% greater than the second highest international city. Although numerous missing person cases have been unsolved, documented homicides in Juarez during 2009 and 2010 were 2,754 and 3,622 respectively.¹¹ Undoubtedly, some of these homicides are attributed to non-drug related criminal activity but the preponderance of murders had direct links to the influx of drug-cartel influence within the city of Juarez. The same demographical and geographical advantage Juarez provides to legitimate U.S. businesses attracts drug cartels seeking efficiencies in the illicit trafficking of drugs and other illegal goods to the U.S.

Since 2011, the aforementioned criminal activity and homicides in Juarez have declined significantly. During 2012, Juarez has experienced a homicide rate decrease of over 60% from 2011, registering only 797 homicides.¹² This same two year period witnessed a 5.4% growth in employment in 2011, followed by a 2.3% growth in the first half of 2012.¹³ Additionally, governmental initiatives such as "We Are All Juarez" spent \$50 million on improvements such as after-school programs and new hospital facilities.¹⁴ The combination of reduced crime, a growing economy, and a renewed focus on quality of life programs for residents has shed a light of promise on the entire city. The sudden shift of positive trends has regional officials questioning why the drug cartels stopped killing and why have they allowed residents to return to a life of relative safety and calm. A growing consensus amongst security professionals, local residents, and media is not attributing the shift to government initiatives, but instead to the end of

the drug war amongst embattled cartels. The drug war was waged to gain unilateral control over the narcotics traffic in Juarez, one of the most prolific drug routes along the Mexico-U.S. border. Therefore, the ultimate beneficiaries of the increased peace and prosperity are not the residents or politicians of Juarez, but the Sinaloa Cartel and its leader Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman.

Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman and The Sinaloa Cartel

The hostile takeover of Ciudad Juarez was simply another business acquisition for El Chapo, considered the world's most powerful drug lord and whose wealth affords him the privilege of occupying the Forbes list of the world's wealthiest people.¹⁵ Although accurately depicted as a ruthless and murderous cartel leader, El Chapo is also an ingenious entrepreneur and the very efficient chief executive officer and president of the Sinaloa Cartel. The early origins of the Sinaloa Cartel began in the 1970s as a conduit between the powerful Colombian Medellin Cartel and the lucrative U.S. market. The demise of the powerful Colombian cartels created a supply-chain void for the once inferior Mexican cartels. The void provided El Chapo's Sinaloa Cartel the opportunity to capture an immense drug enterprise by manufacturing, trafficking, and eventually selling multiple illicit drugs. The Medellin Cartel's insatiable desire for increased publicity in the 1980s, to include Pablo Escobar's entry into politics and overt desire to control every aspect of Columbia's politics, provided El Chapo an important lesson to learn as it pertains to longevity in the drug trafficking business. Consequently, El Chapo has remained almost reclusive even as his popularity makes him an infamous pop culture icon in Mexico.

Although there are no publicly stated objectives, goals, or mission statements from the Sinaloa Cartel, their actions allow insight into El Chapo's ambitions. The drug

trafficking business, by its nature, is a risky endeavor which requires continual adaptations to ensure their illicit product is delivered to the consumer and revenue is safely delivered to the organization. These continual adaptations include constant security in the form of increasing levels of weaponry, greater ingenuity in the methods and forms of delivery, and mutual agreed incentives which produce arrangements amongst local gangs, law enforcement, and politicians. Within a city such as Ciudad Juarez, the Sinaloa Cartel must at times violently overcome other national drug cartels and local gangs vying for the same lucrative drug routes to the U.S. Although El Chapo would rather allocate his resources and personnel towards more efficient revenue producing activities, the geographical dominance required to effectively utilize drug routes is significant. This extreme violence demonstrated by the Sinaloa Cartel, in an effort to maintain their geographical control, has been likened to the violence exhibited by violent extremist in the Middle East. Consequently, a popular trend outside of Mexico is to inappropriately categorize the Sinaloa Cartel as an insurgency.

Sinaloa Cartel's Objectives

El Chapo's Sinaloa Cartel has never demonstrated objectives representative of an insurgency. Joint Pub 1-02 defines an insurgency as an "organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict...Political power is the central issue in an insurgency."¹⁶ The Sinaloa Cartel has never shown evidence of political aspirations, nor a desire to control civil activities unrelated to the distribution of illicit drugs. Additionally, outside of the violent acts committed to gain more efficient distribution networks, El Chapo has successfully organized the Sinaloa Cartel as an enigma and void of political involvement. Reacting to the recent spike in border violence, the U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton,

publicly stated, "These drug cartels are now showing more and more indices of insurgency. All of a sudden, car bombs show up, which weren't there before,"¹⁷ This type of inaccurate assessment perpetuates an ineffective U.S. strategy by confusing similar methods, employed by insurgents in the Middle East and drug cartels in Mexico, as similar objectives. Unfortunately for Mexican officials and the population of Mexico one aspect of Secretary Clinton's remarks is true; the violent tactics used by drug cartels are similar to insurgents, to include the sophistication of weaponry and escalation of brutality.

Once U.S. security professionals discard the categorization of drug cartels as insurgencies, they must accurately determine drug cartels objectives. A more accurate categorization of the Sinaloa Cartel is as a high-intensity criminal organization. Different than low-intensity crime, which is typically associated with short periods of specific criminal activity, high-intensity criminal acts are conducted by violent entrepreneurs who establish, "a set of organizational solutions and action strategies enabling organized force (or organized violence) to be converted into money or other valuable assets on a permanent basis...a means of increasing the private income of the wielders of force through ongoing relations of exchange with other groups that own other resources."¹⁸ Albeit the term insurgency elicits an immediate image of the type of tactics used by drug cartels such as the Sinaloa Cartel and may be used by politicians to create an emotional response amongst constituents; it also causes the security professional trying to provide an appropriate solution to initially view the problem using the wrong lens. Subsequently, the analytical tools used by law enforcement or security officials will fail to recognize the most effective means to resolve the issue due to misunderstood

objectives. Therefore, it is of vital importance to homeland security professionals and politicians to properly identify the threat, consequently producing a viable solution to this complex problem. A contemporary example of properly assessing organizational objectives towards a viable solution is the implementation of counter-insurgency tactics in Iraq during 2007. Violence in Iraq was increasing in 2006 until the Bush administration agreed with military experts to implement counter-insurgency tactics, to include an immediate troop surge. Arguably the U.S. mission in Iraq would have been deemed more successful if we would have identified the need for counter-insurgency operations earlier in the conflict, the safe withdrawal of U.S. military forces in 2011 demonstrated the vital importance of matching effective tactics towards a properly identified problem. Contrastingly, the complex problem facing U.S. security professionals attempting to negate the Sinaloa Cartel's damaging influence within Juarez requires a narrowing focus. Instead of traditional security efforts focused on an entire country which may be on the precipice of failure, the Juarez dilemma demonstrates a contemporary phenomenon of cities failing within a functioning country.

Previous Feral City Assessments

Annually, the United States think tank, Fund for Peace, provides a Failed States Index. This index utilizes over ten metrics based on social, economic, and political indicators. The historically accepted theory of a strong and effective federal government which facilitates prosperous local governments within its borders has shown indications of erosion in the 21st century due to the proliferation of successful non-state actors. International acceptance of the significant influence non-state actors will exert on localized governments, and its constituents, has prompted national security professionals to explore the concept of a failed (feral) city within an otherwise

functioning national government. The Merriam-Webster dictionary has multiple definitions of feral, to include, “having escaped from domestication and become wild.”¹⁹ In an attempt to relate the conventional definition of feral towards the concept of a failed city, the previously mentioned Dr. Norton article, *Feral Cities*, proposed a set of analytical metrics to identify various levels of a city’s progression towards failure. Although Dr. Norton revised his article in 2010, he originally proposed a feral city as “a metropolis with a population of more than a million people in a state the government of which has lost the ability to maintain the rule of law within the city’s boundaries yet remains a functioning actor in the greater international system.”²⁰ His definition, and the forthcoming set of metrics, would sufficiently identify international feral cities with little, to none, security, economic growth, or civil support to its residents. Arguably, the advantage of this type of metropolitan area would be to promote a non-state actor seeking political upheaval and subsequent political gain. As previously mentioned, an organization like the Sinaloa Cartel does not seek such political dominance or the civil responsibility towards urban residents. Therefore, the utopian city for a major drug cartel to efficiently increase levels of revenue would not match Dr. Norton’s aforementioned definition, and to the casual observer might appear more thriving than previously considered.

At the completion of Dr. Norton’s 2010 revision of *Feral Cities*, he proposed 15 metrics based on three levels (green, yellow, and red) and five categories (Governance, Economy, Services, Security, and Civil Society). Dr. Norton suggested an assessment of this table would create a mosaic in which a city’s health could be identified. Additionally, he noted that a preponderance of green or red would not necessarily

determine the ferality of a city, and the assessment is “a diagnostic tool...(which) merely produces a ‘snapshot’ and is therefore of limited utility unless supported by trend analysis.”²¹ Dr. Norton’s description of a city going feral almost elicits an apocalyptic vision in which “city’s occupants have no access to even the most basic health or security assistance...human security is for the most part a matter of individual initiative...(cities) create enough pollution to qualify as an international environmental disaster zone.”²² Although this assessment might be applicable to cities such as Mogadishu during the height of its violence and lack of political control, this type of city would be the exact opposite of the type of environment a narco organization such as the Sinaloa Cartel would need to ensure economic prosperity. With an objective of maximum profit and uninterrupted illicit business activity, El Chapo would seek a thriving city which hides his organizational methods and produces minimal publicity.

Citing Dr. Norton’s pioneering publication regarding the proposed assessment of feral cities, Robert J. Bunker and John P. Sullivan attempted to further assess the subsequent status of a city which went beyond feral. Their theory examined a greater security risk if, or when, a city rebuilt itself beyond a feral status and became functional but only to sustain criminal activity. They created two additional levels, purple and black, respectively described as “fully feral” and “criminal city”.¹¹ The origin of these two new levels were based on Sullivan and Bunker’s theory of third phase cartels and third generation gangs. Narrowing the scope of the Ciudad Juarez challenge for the purpose of this paper, they describe third phase cartels which “rule parallel polities or criminal enclaves, acting much like warlords.”²³ Dr. Bunker and Mr. Sullivan also propose that these third phase cartels “pose a significant challenge to the modern nation-state and its

institutions,” and that “Mexico could prove to be the genesis of a true third phase cartel, as Mexican cartels battle among themselves and the state for dominance.”²⁴ The theory of post-feral cities and third phase cartels posed by Dr. Bunker and Mr. Sullivan is a noteworthy step for national security professionals to realize a very potential threat in the 21st century. Furthermore, the utilization of these 25 characteristics towards situations currently developing within international cities is warranted. However, the fundamental question with regards to the underlying threat still exists, are we basing our entire analysis on an organization based on ideological political goals (insurgency) or an internationally entrepreneurial illegal business organization seeking the greatest profit to maintain preeminence within their business sector (high-intensity crime)?

The violence witnessed in Juarez between 2005 and 2010 garnered international attention. Multiple attempts on behalf of the Mexican government to curb this criminal activity throughout this period proved futile. The majority of violent criminal activity was directly related to a turf war between two major drug cartels, the Juarez and Sinaloa Cartels. The objective of both cartels was to gain invaluable drug routes into the world's most lucrative drug market, the United States. Applying Dr. Norton, Dr. Bunker, and Mr. Sullivan's feral city models poses one significant problem, which is, why has the violence within Juarez decreased since 2010 and the city appears to be growing economically, culturally, and in population? Juarez's five year race towards its own demise was suddenly followed by strong growth, steady politics, and a sense of security for the first time since the turn of the century. Beyond the already mentioned sharp decrease in homicides within Juarez, sales between Juarez and El Paso are up more than 10 billion this year and export sector jobs in Juarez has increased 30% in the last

three years.²⁵ Additionally, a new police chief with a proven success record in Tijuana has appeared to enhance security amongst Juarez's residents based on reduced trends of criminal activity. All of these contradictory trends since 2010 do not invalidate the feral city diagnostic tools; they simply validate the fact that these tools are built with the belief that all feral cities are victims of politically driven insurgencies. Contrastingly, Ciudad Juarez was the victim of ruthless businessmen who had a single-focus of improving the efficiency of their operations. The remainder of this paper will focus on whether the aforementioned trends from 2005-2010, followed by 2011 to present, are sufficient examples to derive another diagnostic tool focused on high-intensity crime.

A New Feral City Perspective

Dr. Norton's initial diagnostic table, depicted in Table 1, describes the conditions of a feral city. Dr. Bunker and Mr. Sullivan's expansion of a feral city's evolutionary progression is portrayed in Table 2. Both of these assessments are valid tools to analyze the effects of insurgent operations within international cities, yet depart from logic when assessing the effects of a high-intensity criminal organization which has successfully obtained their objectives within a metropolitan area. The green level depicted in Table 1 would be internationally accepted as an accurate set of conditions in an optimally functioning city. One could argue this assessment is biased towards western, democratic goals of governance and society, but for the purposes of this paper this type of nation-state will be assumed.

Table 1: Diagnosing Ferality²⁶

	Governance	Economy	Services	Security	Civil Society
Green Level	Enacts effective legislation. Appropriately directs resources. Controls events in all portions of the city day and night. Corruption detected and punished.	Robust. Significant foreign investment. Provides goods and services. Possesses a stable and adequate tax base	Complete range of services. Including educational and cultural, available to all city residents.	Well regulated, professional police forces. Responsive to wide spectrum of requirements.	Rich and robust. Constructive relationships with government.
Yellow Level	Exercises only patchwork or diurnal control. Highly corrupt.	Limited or no foreign investment. Subsidized or decaying industries. Growing deficits. Most foreign investment is quickly removable.	Can manage minimal level of public health, hospital access, potable water, trash disposal.	Little regard for legality/human rights. Police often matched/stymied by criminal "peers".	Relationships with government are confrontational. Civil societal organizations fill government voids.
Red Level	At best, has only negotiated zones of control. At worst, does not exist.	Local subsistence industries or industries based on illegal commerce. Some legislative business interests may be present, based on profit potential.	Intermittent to nonexistent power and water. Those who can afford to will privately contract or allow NGO to provide.	Nonexistent. Security is attained through private means or paying protection.	Civil society fractured along clan/ethnic/other lines. Local elites in control. Security-oriented civil society organizations may become criminal.

Table 2: Fully Feral/Beyond/Beyond Feral²⁷

	Governance	Economy	Services	Security	Civil Society
Purple Level	Does not exist. Extortion of monies, goods, and services replaces taxation. Localized control by street gangs, cartels, private armies, and warlords.	Illegal commerce and industries dominate. Barter system in effect. Legitimate business interests if present, based on high profit potential, and heavily armed/have made alliances with criminal groups	Highly erratic to nonexistent services. Those who can afford to will privately contract or establish own services (e.g. generators/wells). Most NGO providers have left.	Nonexistent. Total collapse of police forces and judiciary. Security is attained through private means, paying protection, and rise of militias/fortified enclaves. Wide spread use of mercenaries.	Civil society in ongoing conflict between clan/ethnic/other lines. Most local elites have fled. Written press no longer exists. Security-oriented civil society organizations are criminal.
Black Level	Legislation and policy based on strong man rule and personal whims. Taxation replacing extortion. Resources directed without the consent of the governed. Control events in all portions of the city, day and night. Corruption is the system.	Active. Some foreign investment. Goods and services, both legitimate and illicit, openly provided. Illicit revenues from criminal activities supplemented by tax base (developing).	Services, including educational and cultural, available to city residents that are loyal/contracted to the criminal government.	Reasonable levels of security provided in public spaces. Police forces (mafia in uniforms) provided internal security for ruling autocrats.	Total shift in value systems to criminal (narco). Spirituality is death/greed based. The strong prey upon the weak and women are disenfranchised.

The yellow level is also closely aligned with a city approaching ferality due to drug cartel influence, however Juarez experienced some additional conditions possibly indicative of common effects inherent with high-intensity crime. In addition to the economic conditions listed in Table 1, unemployment rates among residents could be a strong indicator of a city's decline. At the height of the drug cartel turf war in Juarez in

2009, the unemployment rate climbed to 20%.²⁸ Historically, Juarez has boasted one of the lowest unemployment rates in Mexico due to the border manufacturing opportunities. Throughout 2000-2010, Mexico's unemployment rates range from 2.5-5.6%.²⁹ The rise in unemployment within Juarez appears to be attributed to Juarez's drug cartel wars. The Security conditions described in Dr. Norton's yellow level could be expanded to include a degrading judicial capacity to control the rise of high-intensity crime. Juarez has experienced a 2% success rate towards the prosecution of criminals.³⁰ This obvious lack of resources and effectiveness does not deter criminals from engaging in violent activities, and in fact emboldens drug cartel leaders like El Chapo to fight for the city's valuable drug routes without the fear of prosecution and incarceration

Dr. Norton labeled his red level as "becoming feral". His insurgent based description is comparable to Juarez's experiences in 2010 when violence and criminal depravity was at its peak. Governance within Juarez differed slightly than described in Table 1, which suggest individual pockets of legitimate control. Unlike an insurgency's goal to obtain initial geographic pockets of control with the objective to use these strongholds to eventually gain complete governance, the Sinaloa Cartel did not want to govern any portion of Juarez. Contrastingly, the Sinaloa Cartel wanted to gain total impunity of action, not to be confused with political control, throughout Juarez in order to gain victory over their rival cartel in the area. As mentioned earlier, it could be presumed that the Sinaloa Cartel's leadership would have preferred no violence, government influence, or civilian disruption in obtaining absolute autonomy of Juarez's drug trafficking routes. This would have allowed El Chapo to focus efforts on more

financially lucrative endeavors. However, a peaceful resolution was not possible and El Chapo would resort to any level of violence to gain control.

This theory is strengthened by recent events within the Mexican city of Nuevo Laredo by the Sinaloa Cartel. In an effort to gain control of Nuevo Laredo, the Sinaloa Cartel has begun a violent war with the rival cartel, Los Zetas. After El Chapo ordered the butchering of fourteen Los Zetas members he left a narcomanta, a communications banner frequently posted as an informational tool of drug cartels, to the citizens of Nuevo Laredo stating “We have started to rid Nuevo Laredo of the Zetas because we want a city that is free and because we want the citizens to live in peace. We are Drug traffickers and we don’t mess with honest, hardworking people or local businesses.”³¹ Undoubtedly El Chapo’s self-proclaimed intentions of genuine interest in the well-being of Nuevo Laredo citizens are suspect. However, the narcomanta is evidence of the Sinaloa’s Cartel’s desire for normalcy within their surrounding society, permitting an almost apathetic attitude from police and government officials towards the cartel’s activities. Retrospectively assessing this objective towards Juarez’s ineffective prosecution rates and unprecedented rise in homicides from 2006 thru 2010, it appears El Chapo was willing to suspend his desire for citizens to live in peace while acting with impunity from prosecution.

Another difference between Dr. Norton’s red level and Juarez in 2010 was the description of Civil Society. Dr. Norton projected a civil society fractured along ethnic or political lines, often indicative of the differing political goals of an existing government and a rising insurgency. However, in Juarez there was no political or societal decision for residents to choose. Juarez residents had simple, yet sometimes life threatening

decisions to make. They could choose to join violent drug cartels waging a war for turf in their city streets, or maintain neutrality and obtain legal employment in hopes of providing for their family's welfare. Although these differences in Dr. Norton's Civil Society may seem nebulous, they pose a very clear delineation between the effects of an insurgency and high-intensity criminal organizations.

This paper departs slightly from Dr. Bunker and Mr. Sullivan's description (Table 2) of fully feral (purple) and beyond feral (black) by offering a different perspective (Table 3). They describe a fully feral city as one in which there is no government control and lacks basic necessities of security, services, and economy. Prior to establishing their own style of government, an effective insurgency will attempt to expose the existing government's inability to provide for the basic needs and security of its people. If done successfully this exposure will expand beyond local residents and include regional and international entities capable of favorably influencing change. Contrastingly, the regional and international attention garnered by such lawlessness would be counterproductive to the Sinaloa Cartel's goals. This negative attention would likely precipitate an international reaction with subsequent employment of international security forces to regain the fully feral city. This may lead to a new and effective government, provided through an international and regional effort, with the manpower, money, and security resources to counter a drug cartel's influence. Using the Sinaloa Cartel example in Juarez, there are two primary objectives. The first is to win, through whatever means necessary, the turf war over Juarez and gain access to one of the most lucrative drug routes in the world. The second objective is to gain complete autonomy within Juarez through a complicit government willing to co-exist with a

mutually exclusive organization while governing an economically and culturally thriving city.

Table 3: Feral City: High Intensity Criminal Organization Assessment

	Governance	Economy	Services	Security	Civil Society
Green Level	Enacts effective legislation. Appropriately directs resources. Controls events in all portions of the city day and night. Corruption detected and punished.	Robust. Significant foreign investment. Provides goods and services. Possesses a stable and adequate tax base	Complete range of services. Including educational and cultural, available to all city residents.	Well regulated, professional police forces. Responsive to wide spectrum of requirements.	Rich and robust. Constructive relationships with government.
Yellow Level	Exercises only patchwork or diurnal control. Highly corrupt. Seek national government support.	Uncontrolled violence causes decrease in foreign investment and most is quickly removable. Sharp rise in unemployment rates.	Services interrupted by random violence and brutality. Basic needs frequently met. Public health officials vacate area.	Local security officials/forces overwhelmed, intimidated, and coerced by drug cartels. Many leave or join criminal organizations.	Civil societal organizations attempt to fill government voids. Initial public statements condemning drug cartels are silenced through violence and coercion.
Red Level	Publicly recognized as ineffective. Unable to legitimately control city through legislative efforts. Certain geographical areas have no legitimate governance.	Based on drug cartels desire for a strong export sector, some foreign manufacturing exists due to profit margin opportunities. Local business activity is sparse.	Services not required to sustain licit and illicit business activities are insufficient or nonexistent.	Nonexistent. Security is attained through private means or paying protection. Unprecedentedly low arrest to incarceration rates.	Civil society fractured along legal and illegal participants. Cartel leaders are the local elites.

Table 3: Feral City: High Intensity Criminal Organization Assessment (cont)

	Governance	Economy	Services	Security	Civil Society
Purple Level	Established, locally recognized, and representative government focused on legislation favorable to the basic needs of residents. Corruption is inherent yet reciprocal relationships mitigate negative attention. Cartel's have impunity of action.	Increase foreign investment and manufacturing industry promotes healthy tax base. Reliance on exports facilitates detection of illicit trafficking.	Uninterrupted basic services which sustain population, attract manufacturing work force, and does not require significant assistance from national government.	Publicly and institutionally focused on street crime, contributing to daily stability and security of residents. Cooperate and collaborate with major drug cartel, largely ignoring activities and disrupting any competitive drug cartels influence.	Complicit civil leaders establish strong relationships with government agencies. Promote only those vibrant civil functions which are personally beneficial and permitted by drug cartel leaders.
Black Level "Beyond Feral"	Internationally accepted due to regular and uncontested elections. Recognized for its superficial recovery from previously corrupted officials.	Low unemployment rates, strong exports, and favorable growth indicators maintain current business investment and attract future industries.	Services remain uninterrupted and sufficient for resident's daily needs. No improvements beyond what is needed to promote future industry	Deaths per capita and violent crime is relatively low. Incarceration rates increase due to security forces and major drug cartel's cooperative effort to target other criminal organizations.	Civil leadership publicly promotes new activities, privately permitted by the drug cartel, as signs of emergence. Civil leadership is targeted by drug cartels to complete the necessary triad of complicity (government, security, civil society)

El Chapo's, and any head of a major drug cartel, vision of a fully feral city would include: a government which is locally recognized as responsible and in control, an economy which attracts local and foreign investment with large export capacity and subsequent wealth for residents, services which provide uninterrupted support, security for local residents which eliminates external criminal organizations, and a civil society

which portrays a strong relationship between government and all represented demographic groups. This is not a superficially vibrant city, but one that is wealthy, secure, and resilient. The underlying “fully feral” aspect of the city is founded in the unconditional acceptance of a large criminal organization free to maximize the bounds of its capitalistic goals without interference of the government or population. Such an arrangement could only be gained from a city, and its residents, willing to accept this alternative over the extreme violence experienced over a long period of time; such as Juarez’s categorization of murder capital of the world from 2005-2010.

Through the lens of a high-intensity criminal organization, the beyond feral (black) level would demonstrate no differences in conditions from the purple level revised above. The difference is simply a matter of regional and international acceptance. A Beyond Feral city would escape international recognition as a city in trouble. Based on accepted metrics of normalcy – low unemployment rates, high export ratios, reduced criminal activity, and growing population statistics – the international community at large would ignore the large criminal activity prevalent in the city. With the exception of a few organizations attempting to bring attention to the drug trafficking activity in the city, major press companies and think tanks focus their attention on regional and international issues with more overt indicators. Due to a lack of political pressure, politicians remain ambivalent by denouncing the drug trade and drug cartels, but not willing to attempt a politically risky endeavor of forcefully engaging a deeply imbedded, and effectively violent, drug cartel. Undoubtedly this arrangement would still require a drug cartel to provide large sums of money to bribery of local and regional

officials, but the source of revenue gained from such bribes would be reciprocated by immense profit margins.

Conclusion: The Effects of a Narco-Controlled Feral City

As Dr. Norton mentioned, the assessment of a feral city cannot be determined by taking a snapshot of city's current state. A valid assessment must account for not only historical context, but the city's trends as it relates to regional and international trends and influences. The diagnostic tool aggregately proposed by Dr. Norton, Dr. Bunker, and Mr. Sullivan is simply a mosaic representation and only one aspect of the overall assessment. The high-intensity criminal version, Table 3, is still a mosaic representation but offers a different assessment based on the specific complexities posed by drug cartels. Juarez is a city that has endured a tumultuous experience the last decade. From a vibrant city capitalizing on its U.S. border relationship in the late 1990s, to a city in 2010 garnering the pity of the international community due to its violence, failing economy, and lack of future depicted in such headlines as , "Ciudad Juarez: From Boom Town to Ghost Town?"³² But the city has realized significant and positive changes this decade. Although the murder rate in Juarez is still relatively high by international standards, it has reduced its homicides by more than half in a two year timeframe. Its economic growth and local civil services investment has increased significantly in the last two years.

Unfortunately for Juarez its recent growth is not confined to legal activities; the city's criminal element is still present and is more prolific than before. El Chapo's status as one of the wealthiest men in the world does not appear to be in jeopardy. Currently, Forbes magazine ranks El Chapo as the 60th most powerful person in the world and labeled him as the "biggest drug lord ever."³³ Yet his almost reclusive lifestyle affords

him relative anonymity outside of security professionals engaged in drug trafficking reduction. In stark contrast to previous drug lords, like the aforementioned Medellin Cartel leader Pablo Escobar, El Chapo's secluded lifestyle reduces public scrutiny and offers far greater security. Similar to this paper's proposed conditions of a fully feral (purple) city, Juarez has experienced outward signs of recovery and growth without any signs of reducing the criminal element responsible for its initial problems. Positive signs throughout Juarez hide the nearly complicit acceptance of the Sinaloa Cartel's illicit business operations throughout the city. Conservative estimates project Sinaloa Cartel annual revenue at over \$3 billion.³⁴ El Chapo's recent violent acquisition of Juarez's important drug trafficking routes from the Juarez Cartel will certainly increase his annual profit margin. With such an immense empire of money, weapons, and power, the only question which remains for local Juarez officials, police, and residents is, does this current arrangement work better than the alternative experienced from 2005-2010?

As regional and international communities await the answer from Ciudad Juarez and Mexico, the U.S. must prepare itself to address the feral city on our immediate border. The U.S. government can decide to increase its border protection to unprecedented levels to obtain a perception of control. However the risk may not be reduced but simply adjusted by the narco-criminal professionals resolute in their desire to maintain huge profit margins based on illicit drug trafficking. The ultimate source of the problem is very simple: the U.S. is the largest consumer of illegal drugs in the world and we share our border with a nation whose population lives in relative poverty, earning a minimum wage of \$1.00(USD).¹⁹ The disparity of economies and quality of life is the basis of the infamous Mexico Curse coined by their president Porfirio Diaz

(1830-1915), “Poor Mexico, So far from God and so close to the United States.”³⁵ This Mexican Curse describes, in simple terms, the challenges faced by a country in the shadows of the United States. The U.S. population lives in a relative wealth inconceivable to most of the world, with the capacity to spend approximately \$65 billion dollars annually on illegal drugs. Furthermore, due available resources which produce very capable cities, states, and national security forces, the U.S. does an adequate job mitigating the effectiveness of large illegal organizations such as drug cartels. This causes a fundamental void in the standard supply-demand relationship which Mexican entrepreneurs are more than willing to fill. For Mexicans struggling with lower educational standards, high unemployment in young adults and low minimum wage for those able to find a job, the ability to gain quick wealth often outweighs the inherent risk. The United States is trapped looking outward for an answer to Mexico’s drug cartel problem in hopes that border cities like Ciudad Juarez will not become a feral city and infect a U.S. city like El Paso with heightened criminal activity. However, the lure of personal wealth gained from an illicit \$65 billion dollar enterprise cannot be reduced by any amount of security until demand is reduced.

The further advancement of feral city assessments will enable security professionals to prevent the spread of associated violence, economic decline, and civil decay. The global trend of non-state actors capitalizing on advancements in communication to spread their ideals, while increasing awareness of the perceived corruption of established local and regional governments, increases the likelihood of future feral cities in various forms. Dr. Norton’s initial attempt to assess this challenge has been expanded in the last decade. Advancements include additional

considerations by Dr. Norton and the direct correlation by Dr. Bunker and Mr. Sullivan to a feral city created from a third generation cartel.

The purpose of this paper was to assess the previously identified feral city diagnostic conditions through a different lens. The ramifications of a city gripped by an insurgency will be different than a city saturated by an extremely successful high-intensity criminal organization. The city of Ciudad Juarez has historically experienced the geographical benefits of its shared border with El Paso. However, the last ten years the city of Juarez has witnessed the violence exhibited by the Sinaloa Cartel as they successfully gained complete control of a strategic drug route into the U.S. The last two years of relative calm and economic recovery, after the Sinaloa Cartel's victory, is being heralded as a success of the Mexican government. A different perspective might illuminate a situation in which the only control demonstrated by national and local officials is that control which is granted by the Sinaloa Cartel. A situation in which Ciudad Juarez is absolutely powerless to control their fate, existing in a state of relative calm and prosperity, unless a major drug cartel living within their city decides otherwise based solely on the economic needs of their high-intensity criminal organization.

Endnotes

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